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SUBJECT: NEW ALGERIAN AMBASSADOR TO MEETS WITH AMBASSADOR

Classified By: Ambassador Gillian A. Milovanovic, for reasons 1.4 (b)
(d).

¶1. (S) The new Algerian Ambassador to Mali, Nourredine Ayadi, paid what turned out to be much more than a courtesy call on the Ambassador on February 10. Ayadi said Algeria's and Mali's fate were tied together by history and geography. Unfortunately, the two countries have a very different approach to dealing with the threat of AQIM, which has installed itself in the North of Mali, and has proven itself capable of doing a lot of harm not only in the region but internationally. The GOM is not living up to its international obligations with respect to countering terrorism and has displayed a fair degree of laxity, if not to say complicity in dealing with the terrorists.

¶2. (S) Algeria will continue to play a role in mediating the dispute between various Tuareg groups and the GOM. The ADC has told the GOA that the Algiers Accords are not being implemented, and the Government of Mali's response thus far has largely been ceremonial. The ADC has asked for an evaluation of the status of implementation of the accords, but the Malians have put it off sine die. The GOM wants to move the Kidal Comité de Suivi to Bamako, on the grounds that its work has been accomplished and it needs to move to the capital for the next phase. The ADC and GOA think more work needs to be done, but the GOA has not taken a position about the move. Algeria offered to the ADC to hold meetings in Algiers as they work on Algiers Accords implementation. The Algerian Ambassador felt this may have soured Bamako on Algerian involvement as the GOM seems to have seen Algiers, offer to the ADC as interference and encouragement to one side in the Algiers Accords. The meeting of Tuareg groups in Algeria was viewed to be a sop to Mali's enemies by the Government of Mali, to judge by press reports.

¶3. (S) Ayadi said the P5 of the UN Security Council has a duty to uphold UNSCR 1267, which established a sanctions regime to cover individuals associated with Al Qaeda and subsequent resolutions. Paying ransom in exchange for hostages is a violation of international law.

¶4. (S) The Ambassador said the United States has the same policy not to make substantive concessions to terrorists or hostage takers. She noted that it is difficult to level criticism on countries like Mali and Burkina Faso for facilitating negotiations when the countries that pay ransom, like Austria and Canada are given a pass. Everyone needs to get the same message. Ayadi agreed. He said paying ransom will only make citizens of the ransom-paying nations targets of future hostage taking attempts. If they stay out of the

North, the terrorists will only come down to Bamako to snatch them.

¶15. (S) The Ambassador said there has been lots of talk of a heads of state meeting in Bamako. A number of high level U.S. military and civilian government officials have made the trip to Algiers to discuss the AQIM problem, and the GOA has consistently stated that "Yes, we want cooperation; yes, we want Mali to do more; yes, we want to attend the Bamako summit." The Ambassador noted that she has met with Malian Government officials, who have said that whenever they try to organize the summit one or the other of the prospective participants claims to be unable to attend. She asked how, if the summit is important, even from a superficial point of view to give political cover, we can work together to ensure that it happens. If it is not important to Algiers, what can we do for the Malian President? The Ambassador said ATT vacillates between saying he is going to go it alone, if necessary, and expressing the view that he has to wait until the summit or until he has the clear agreement to cooperate from neighbors like Algeria.

¶16. (S) As for cooperation on a joint center for operations at Tamanrasset, the Ambassador noted Algeria states that cooperation has started and they are willing to move forward, but the Malians are dragging their feet. The Malians claim the reverse is true: they have hosted high level visits from Algerian generals and have sent equivalent-level representation to Tamanrasset for meetings, but nothing concrete ever comes of it, according to them. Without inserting the United States in an inappropriate manner, the Ambassador asked, what would you propose that we do?

¶17. (S) Ayadi said that when one's house is on fire, one does not wait for the fire truck to do something. The GOM is not operating in good faith. The summit is not a pre-condition to action. We do not have the impression that the GOM thinks of AQIM as the enemy. He said the release of the information he was about to relate had not been cleared by Algiers: the Algerian army had attempted to conduct an operation against AQIM with the Malians on Malian soil, but AQIM had been tipped off in advance and moved out of range. He said that several months ago, Algeria had formally requested the extradition of two high level detainees, but the GOM responded that they were not in their custody. If Mali were to show the will to engage, we will support them. The Ambassador asked if these were the conditions of support: extradition of the two detainees and conducting some military action against AQIM.

¶18. (S) Ayadi said yes. We don't need permission to take action if the GOA and the GOM want to take action. The Algerian side is ready. He said we speak from experience. The first attack took place in Algeria in 1989, against a military outpost far away from Algiers. Everyone said "it's far away, we don't have to worry about it," but two years later Algiers was in blood and flames. People in Mali don't realize what they are getting themselves into. We Algerians have paid a very heavy toll to gain mastery over the situation and now we don't want to see things come apart again because AQIM has established itself in Northern Mali.

¶19. (S) The Ambassador said the United States is trying to take a systematic approach to training and equipping Malian Army units, particularly those units responsible for providing security in the North. We find the Malian soldiers to be willing partners with extremely limited resources. Success will not be achieved overnight; they are not able to do much. We would like to get to a point where if the Malian Army tries to engage they will not face humiliation and become demoralized.

¶10. (S) Ayadi claimed that the Malian Army had shown capability to take action against the Tuareg rebellion but refuse to do anything about AQIM. Niger has fewer resources but does more in the fight, and the proof is that AQIM has been unable to establish a base in that country. It looks

worse than weakness on the part of the Malians, it looks like willful complicity. Ayadi mentioned the Tenere radios, and how Mauritania had used its ability to communicate with Algeria via radio to cooperate on the hostage crisis. In Mali, by contrast, the Tenere radio has not even been taken out of its plastic wrapping. The Ambassador noted that Mali had only recently received a Tenere radio from Algeria, that we were working to provide more, and that she understood they had been testing secure communications.

¶11. (S) Comment: Ambassador Ayadi,s accusatory and dismissive assessment of Mali is consistent with the views of his predecessor and with views expressed in Algiers to various high level USG representatives. His laughing off the idea of a Bamako Summit and his explanation of Algeria,s bottom line requirement of the Malians, that they undertake military operations against AQIM before Algeria will consider working with or helping them, however, is at variance with statements coming from Algiers. What is consistent is the pattern of frequent changes in describing the faults of the Malians that are causing Algiers not to act. Our attempts to elicit constructive information about how to bring the two neighbors together to deal with a common problem, and questions about practical follow up to Tamanrasset and Mali,s proposed operation plan, were consistently disregarded in favor of pursuing a litany of complaints against Bamako. The dispute between Mali and Algeria over two detainees whom Algeria wants extradited and France wants liberated in exchange for its hostage has particularly soured Malian-Algerian relations at the moment. As it is easier, and feels more virtuous, to list problems than work toward solutions, it seems likely that efforts to bring Mali and Algeria closer to fight AQIM, though necessary, will continue to be a very uphill battle.

MILOVANOVIC